



Small group study

Leaders notes - week 5 (Week beginning 8th Nov)

“Perfection”

Philippians Chapter 3: 12 & 13

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it.

1) We are coming close to the end of another year, did you make a New Year resolution that you have still kept? Have you ever been able to do it? If so was it something that has made a significant difference to your life?

The study today is about the idea of being a perfect person (something that is not a reality in this life but through faith in Christ becomes a reality as we enter Glory) We are encouraged through Paul's words to remain faithful and to press on, to keep going on the course we are heading. The first question is to stimulate thinking about us trying to better ourselves through our own efforts.

2) When Paul writes, “all this” - to what exactly is he referring to?

Paul is simply referring back to what we discussed in the last study in the previous verses:

“I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.”

These were things that Paul said he wanted to know, not things he already knew or had possession of. This is what Paul was aiming for.

3) He speaks of “that for which Christ took hold of me.” From what we have studied so far in Philippians what do you think he is referring to here?

When Paul says that Christ Jesus “took hold” of him, that was an understatement.

Do you remember when Jesus took hold of Paul? He was on the road to Damascus when a brilliant light shone from heaven and Jesus Himself spoke to him. Now the question “Why?” Why did Jesus take hold of Paul? In Acts 9:15 the Lord said, “This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.” Jesus took hold of Paul's life, took control of it and filled it with purpose.

4) Why was he telling those who would read this letter that he hadn't got there yet, that he hadn't “taken hold of it” yet?

Paul wanted to be sure that these people in Philippi didn't get the wrong idea that Paul was somehow a perfect man who was better than them but who like them was still struggling with being the person Christ wanted him to be. The Christian life is not a life that is easier when we try harder but when we depend more.

5) Is the idea of “being perfect” to a Christian a stumbling block or a divine incentive?

For some people this is almost too much to consider as they see it all about them and what they have to do instead of what God is prepared to do through them. For some it is a joyful thought that this is a journey that will see them completing the course set out for them if they remain faithful and keep their eyes fixed on Jesus.

6) “The meek man is not a human mouse afflicted with a sense of his own inferiority. Rather he may be in his moral life as bold as a lion and as strong as Samson; but he has stopped being fooled about himself. He has accepted God's estimate of his own life.” A.W. Tozer. How important is humility in the Christian life? Why?

We need to empty ourselves so that God can fill us. If we retain things in our life that are not from God then we have robbed ourselves of the blessings that God could have poured into those areas. If we have an inaccurate view of ourselves and our own importance then we become less reliable on God feeling that we can do it on our own without any help from God.

7) The author of Hebrews writes, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.” Combining these verses from Hebrews and the passage we are looking at today, what do we need to do to become “perfect”? How easy is this for us?

We need to do certain things to ensure that we stay on the path that the Lord has set out for us:

- A) “Press on”
- B) “Take hold”
- C) “Throw off all that hinders”
- D) “Run with perseverance the race marked out for us”
- E) And “Fix our eyes upon Jesus.”

How easy this is perhaps a good discussion to finish on.